

Army Leaders Report on Army Transformation

Meg Williams

LTG John S. Caldwell, Jr., Military Deputy, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics & Technology moderated a panel on Synchronization and Integration of Army Transformation, at the Acquisition Senior Leaders' Conference, Aug. 12-14.

Panel members included LTG John M. Riggs, Director, Objective Force Task Force; LTG Steven W. Boutelle, Chief Information Officer/G-6; LTG Charles S. Mahan, Jr., Deputy Chief of Staff/G-4; Don Tison, Deputy Chief of Staff/G-8; and Don Damstetter, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Plans, Programs and Resources.

Caldwell began the panel discussion with remarks on how far Army acquisition has come — and how it leads. “When we started the digitization of the battlefield and LTG Boutelle put together the first Central Technical Support Facility, we made sure that we involved real users the entire time. When we went to Fort Lewis, you heard sergeant first classes and warrant officers talking about this stuff. Years ago, no one would have believed that this would happen. We, the Army, really taught the Defense Department how to do this type of business,” Caldwell explained.

“Army acquisition is moving into a new collaborative environment involving the user community, the materiel community, the Pentagon and virtual environments,” Caldwell continued. “We’re increasing the degree we are going to have to synchronize and integrate.”

“If transformation is about anything,” Riggs added, “it’s about beginnings, not endings.” He advised those assembled that the way to do business in the future must not be vertical stovepipe processes, but rather horizontally integrated organizations. The Objective Force Task Force was chartered to look across the Doctrine, Training, Leader Development, Organization, Materiel and Soldiers process in a holistic manner.

Transformation planning must include network connectivity. “The network is almost a utility — like electricity,” Boutelle said. “And system-of-systems is a grid. So if you bring a program in and tell me you don’t need ‘electricity,’ I’m going to start peeling back the onion. You may not need it today, but you better start thinking about your requirements over the next 5 to 10 years.”

Boutelle cautioned the project and product managers assembled to work with the Army Architecture Integration Cell to plan network needs. Connectivity must be engineered early in the systems development process. If you get to the initial operational test and evaluation period and you haven’t done this — it’s too late and too costly to backtrack.

When asked about spiral development — another important part of integration and synchronization for transformation — Tison said that programs must be testable and provable to satisfy the U.S. Army Test & Evaluation Command requirements and the costing side of the house. “What’s important is that you understand how the engagement works and where the resources are,” he said.

From Damstetter’s perspective, synchronization is a major planning consideration for future operations. “How do you fit in Joint warfare?” he asked. “I don’t see it going away and frankly I think it’s good. As we move toward Future Combat Systems and Joint warfighters — if we [the Army] don’t do it, the Office of the Secretary of Defense is going to do it for us and we’re going to lose.”

One of the key enablers of transformation is the term “Responsible Official for Sustainment.” It means that sustainers will have visibility into logistical requirements early in the development process. “Ad hoc sustainability must give way to non-ad hoc processes,” Mahan stated.

The 5-person panel also answered questions from the audience. One participant asked what were the major challenges facing acquisition commanders in the immediate future.

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"We are at war and transforming," Caldwell said. "We are deployed all over the world and the challenge is to be responsive to current commanders deployed and to our own future transformation."

"We could sustain everything we've got with every dollar we've got and not have anything for the future," Riggs responded. "A better question to ask is 'How are we going to balance the resources we have available?'"

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Army Acquisition Corps Task Forces Embedded in Iraqi Theater

Meg Williams

'Justice and McCoy' was a refrain heard often during the Acquisition Senior Leaders' Conference, Aug. 12-14. If you wanted to hear how the Army Acquisition Corps (AAC) went to war and helped warfighters succeed in Operation Iraqi Freedom, you needed to hear what Justice and McCoy had to say.

Both colonels commanded forward-deployed task forces with embedded combat acquisition soldiers in the tactical units. COL Nickolas G. Justice commanded the Information Management Task Force (TF). He is Project Manager for Force XXI Battle Command Brigade and Below (FBCB2), Program Executive Office, Command, Control and Communications (Tactical). COL Curtis L. McCoy, Project Manager, Bradley Fighting Vehicle Systems, Program Executive Office, Ground Combat Systems, commanded the Combat ASAALT - Southwest Asia TF Operations Center, or CAT Force for short.

When they first deployed, impressions of the AAC were less than optimal: "When I got over to theater we didn't have a good rap," McCoy said.

"The first time I met MG Thurman he said to me, 'You're one of those drive-by fielding type of PMs.'"

Justice further explained that to MG Thurman "drive-by fielding" means that you leave him with the equipment. It doesn't mean that you failed to complete your new equipment training (NET) or that you failed to bring all your equipment to the field. "What we as Project Managers consider a proper fielding doesn't cut it with him," Justice said. "He told me 'It's your equipment, you need to stay here and make it work.' What he was telling me is a story about building confidence in the Army that what we in acquisition do is great."

The acquisition personnel in theater quickly changed this perception by learning to think like soldiers — what

Justice referred to as "getting in the same foxhole as the warfighter." We built command centers, we brought Blue Force Tracking to the theater and we partnered with the Army Materiel Command (AMC), said Justice. They also provided NET, maintenance and operational support, and gave battle damage assessments to combatant commanders in the fight.

Acquisition's value-add to warfighters was its engineering expertise. "We brought engineering skills to the table no one else had," Justice said. "AMC is supply. When they look at us, it's as engineering talent."

Besides its agility in engineering, the CAT Force excelled in accelerated fielding, bringing the PATRIOT Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) missile system, the Bradley M2A2 ODS (*Operation Desert Storm*), the FBCB2 Blue Force Tracking, the Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) M270A1, the command and control vehicle and Battle Control Vehicle weapon systems to the Iraqi theater.